TRANSPORT OF COAL-TAR DERIVATIVES IN THE

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN-JORDAN AQUIFER,

ST. LOUIS PARK, MINVESOTA

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5

A Project Proposal

by the

Minnesota District U.S. Geological Survey

December 1980

INTRODUCTION

Operation of a coal-tar distillation and wood-preserving plant during 1918-72 in St. Louis Park, a suburb of Minneapolis, Minn., resulted in serious contamination of ground water. The severity of the pollution, and the efforts of local, State, and Federal agencies to define and resolve the technical, management, and legal issues involved, have made this problem highly visible. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Region V of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency agree that the contamination in St. Louis Park is the most significant single example of ground-water pollution identified to date within their jurisdictions.

In July 1978, the U.S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Health (MLH), began a two-year project to develop a detailed understanding of the transport of coal-tar derivatives through the ground-water system in the St. Louis Park area. Information on multiaquifer wells in the area was provided to the MDH in February 1979. Hult and Schoenberg (1980) summarize data obtained during the first year of the study and present preliminary conceptual models of the mechanisms and pathways of contaminant transport. Hult (1981a) interprets these and additional data in greater detail and presents the results of preliminary analytical and computer modeling of transport in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer. Hult (1981b) evaluates the effect of multiaquifer wells on the spread of contaminants between aquifers.

As stated in the project proposal for the first two-year project (December 1978, p. 2):

"The problem is complex... The first two-year study (MN 79-061) will provide valuable insight into the problem and will aid decisions on probable continuation of the project for at least two more years. Development and application of a calibrated ground-water transport model to evaluate the possible effects of remedial actions proposed by State and local agencies will require extension of this project."

The new two-year project now being proposed is in agreement with the timing and purpose of the project foreseen in 1978 and cited in the previous paragraph. The major effort will be to help resolve the contamination problem. However, contamination of ground water by toxic organic compounds is a National problem. Research by the U.S. Geological Survey to obtain a detailed understanding of the St. Louis Park problem will have significant transfer value to similar problems elsewhere.

"Because of intense local concern, considerable Federal interest, complexity of the problem, and difficulty of effective remedial action, it is anticipated that continued funding will be available. The approach to the problem must therefore balance the immediate needs of the cooperators with the longer-term requirements of a more definitive study." (1978 project proposal, p. 4).

THE PROBLEM

The problem of most immediate concern to the city and to State and Federal regulatory agencies is the presence of toxic organic compounds in water withdrawn from some municipal wells in the area. When the first municipal well was drilled in 1932, the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer contained water with a coal-tar taste at least 3,500 feet from the plant site. During 1978-80, use of five more St. Louis Park municipal wells completed in this aquifer was discontinued because the wells yielded water containing trace amounts of coal-tar compounds, including benzo(a)pyrene, a carcinogen.

Contaminants in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer have moved at least 2 miles northeast and southeast of the plant site. The direction and rate of contaminant movement changes with time because the bedrock ground-water flow system continually adjusts to hydraulic stresses caused by ground-water with-drawals and flow through wells that connect more than one aquifer. Contaminants can move rapidly through the Prairie du Chien-Jordan because the upper part of the aquifer is a carbonate rock having fracture and solution-channel permeability and low effective porosity. Consequently, the concentration and composition of contaminants in water pumped from individual industrial and municipal wells completed in the aquifer fluctuates with time.

The Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer is the region's major ground-water resource. About 75 percent of ground-water withdrawals in the St. Louis Park and Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan areas are from this aquifer. The aquifer is relatively well protected from near-surface sources of contamination. In the St. Louis Park area, it is 250 to 500 feet below land surface and is overlain by drift, two bedrock confining beds (Glenwood and basal St. Peter) and two bedrock aquifers (Platteville and St. Peter). Nonetheless, it is now contaminated. The project now being proposed will focus on the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer because of its local and regional importance, and the significance of the widespread contamination to municipal water supplies.

The greatest mass of contaminants is in the drift and uppermost bedrock aquifer (Platteville) near the site. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of the introduction and transport of contaminants through the ground-water system. Coal-tar derivatives reached the water table by percolation through the unsaturated zone and through ponds that received surface runoff and process water from the plant (fig. 1). Parts of the drift contain an undissolved, liquid mixture of many individual coal-tar compounds. In June 1980, a sample of this liquid from a monitoring well completed in the drift 50 feet below the water table contained 97,000 mg/L total organic carbon. The hydrocarbon fluid has moved vertically downward essentially perpendicular to the direction of ground-water flow because it is more dense than water. It is moving more slowly than the ground water because it is more viscous. Ground water entering the area of the plant site through the drift is contaminated by

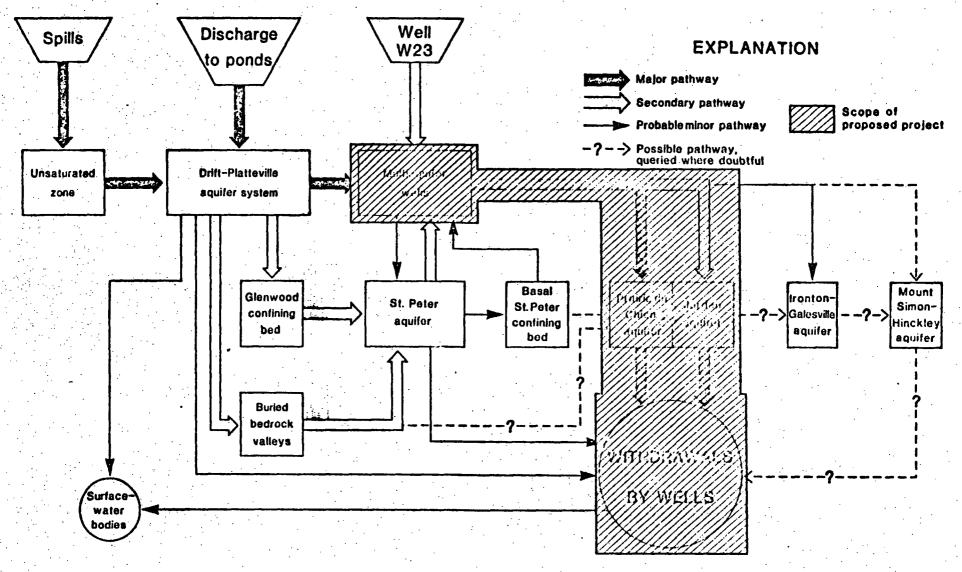


Figure 1.—Flow chart showing conceptual model of introduction and transport of coal-ter derivatives through the ground-water system, St. Louis Fark area, Minnescta and scepe of proposed project (modified from Hult, 1981a)

partial solution of the hydrocarbon fluids and by release of compounds sorbed on the drift materials. The contaminated water moves laterally to the east and southeast, and downward into the Platteville aquifer. Water in the drift 4,000 feet from the site contains less than 10 mg/L dissolved organic carbon, but has a distinct "chemical" odor, and contains a large proportion of coaltar compounds of high solubility in water relative to compounds of low solubility. It seems that some organic-contaminant compounds moving through the drift are being degraded by anerobic bacteria to other organic compounds and to methane. The USGS Research Group, with the assistance of the district, is continuing to investigate the rates of degradation, the compounds being degraded, and the nature of intermediate degradation products.

Contaminants entered the uppermost bedrock aquifer, the Platteville, directly from the drift and have moved at least 7,000 feet from the site. The contaminants reached deeper bedrock aquifers, primarily the Prairie du Chien-Jordan, through wells that hydraulically connect the aquifers (fig. 1). Coaltar compounds have moved to a depth of at least 650 feet in the bore of a multiaquifer well 4,000 feet from the site. Locally, the contaminants have reached the St. Peter aquifer through the Glemwood confining bed and(or) through bedrock valleys where the confining bed has been removed by erosion (fig. 1). In addition, coal-tar has entered bedrock aquifers, possibly from a spill, directly through a well on the site that was drilled in 1917 to a depth of 909 feet (well W23; fig. 1).

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this and the previous study is to obtain a detailed understanding of the transport of coal-tar derivatives through ground water in the St. Louis Park area. This understanding will be used to test management strategies suggested by the cooperators or their consultants and will have considerable transfer value to ground-water contamination problems elsewhere in the Nation.

The specific objectives of the proposed study are to:

- Develop an improved understanding of the distribution and movement of selected coal-tar derivatives in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer.
- Provide for consultation with the U.S. Geological Survey by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, city of St. Louis Park, and their consultants.
- 3. Provide for continued geophysical logging and evaluation of multiaquifer wells as they are located in the field.
- 4. Obtain additional information on the physical and chemical characteristics of the source volume of contaminants in the drift and in well W23.
- 5. Preserve continuity in the collection of time-series water-level and pumpage data from all aquifers.
- 6. Provide continuing support for related, but separately-funded, basic and applied research by the U.S. Geological Survey, such as the study of biodegradation of coal-tar derivatives.

A major emphasis in the proposed project is the development of a method for evaluating the effectiveness of measures proposed to minimize both the concentration of coal-tar derivatives in municipal wells in the area, and the continued spread of contaminants in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer. Hult (1981a) has shown that manipulation of withdrawals from industrial and municipal wells, in conjunction with a continued effort to locate, evaluate, and seal multiaquifer wells that permit contaminated water to flow into the aquifer, may be effective in minimizing the concentration of contaminants reaching municipal wells. Preliminary solute-transport computer models of the aquifer that have been developed to date have proven to be a useful tool in evaluating the problem. The proposed project focuses on refining this tool to better reflect hydrogeologic conditions and on using it to evaluate the hydrologic effects of future management strategies.

Multiaquifer wells are the major pathways identified to date of contaminant transport to the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer (Hult, 1981a; 1981b). Continuing evaluation of multiaquifer wells, in conjunction with the well-abandonment program of the MDH, is within the scope of the proposed project. Reconstruction of multiaquifer wells as monitoring wells would be highly desirable but would require additional funding.

Evaluation of other pathways of contaminant transport to the aquifer such as those shown in figure 1 will depend mostly on previously collected data. Coal tar entered the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer through a deep well on the site (well W23; "Hinckley well on the site"). The coal tar in and around the well may be a continuing source of contaminants to the aquifer (Hult, 1978; 1981a; 1981b; Hult and Schoenberg, 1980). Tar and water samples from the well will be collected and analyzed for the proposed project. Additional steps needed to evaluate this source have been suggested to the Minnesota Department of Health and would require additional funding. Contaminants may also be entering the Prairie du Chien-Jordan from the overlying St. Peter aquifer (fig. 1). The mass of contaminants that has entered the aquifer through multiaquifer wells (Hult 1981a). Installation of additional monitoring wells would be needed to further test this hypothesis and would require additional funding.

Management strategies aimed at minimizing the impact of the contaminants are summarized in table 1. Each of the three user alternatives have been implemented or are being evaluated by the city of St. Louis Park. The quality of water withdrawn from municipal wells is being monitored by the city and the Minnesota Department of Health. Pilot studies by the city and their consultants have shown that organic contaminants can be partly removed by treatment with activated carbon. The city has increased withdrawals from deeper wells completed in the Mount Simon-Hinckley aquifer and is evaluating the cost and desirability of deepening existing wells, drilling new, deeper wells, and(or) obtaining water from the city of Minneapolis.

Table 1.--Summary of management strategies to minimize the impact of ground-water contaminants (modified from Hult, 1981a)

1. USER ALTERNATIVES

- a. Monitor the quality of water at the well head. If quality is unacceptable,
- b. Treat, or
- c. Develop alternative supplies.

2. AQUIFER MANAGEMENT

- a. Prevent or reduce movement of contaminants into the aquifer of concern. For example, locate and seal multiaquifer wells that permit contaminated water to flow into the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer.
- b. Control the movement of contaminants within the aquifer of concern so that the concentration of contaminants at each withdrawal well does not exceed acceptable limits. In the Prairie du Chien-Jordan, this might be accomplished by manipulating pumpage from municipal and industrial wells, and by pumping wells installed for the purpose of controlling hydraulic gradients.

3. SOURCE MANAGEMENT

- a. Intercept contamination leaving the source volume in the drift with withdrawal wells, treat (if necessary), and reinject or discharge.
- b. Immobilize the contaminants in the source volume either with hydraulic or physical barriers or by chemically reducing contaminant solubility.
- c. Convert contaminant compounds in the source to other compounds that are less toxic by encouraging in-situ degradation by anerobic bacteria or by providing oxygen for degradation by aerobic bacteria.
- d. Remove (partly) the source by excavation and pumpout wells.

The proposed project will focus on using a solute-transport model to evaluate the hydrologic effects of the aquifer-management strategies for the Prairie du Chien-Jordan indicated in table 1. The Minnesota Department of Health began a program of well abandonment in February 1979, based on information provided by the U.S. Geological Survey. This program has been effective in reducing the amount of contaminants entering the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer. Manipulating pumpage from wells may be effective in reducing the contaminant concentration at any given well and in preventing the further spread of contaminants. Figure 2 shows changes in the concentration of some coal-tar compounds in water from St. Louis Park municipal well 4 and pumpage from municipal well 6. Well 4 was pumped only for the purpose of obtaining samples. Both wells are completed in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer; no other nearby wells were known to have been pumping during the period indicated. The data from wells 4 and 6 support the tentative conclusion that manipulating pumpage may be effective in reducing contaminant concentrations at individual withdrawal wells. However, additional time-series data on contaminant concentration, pumpage, and water levels are needed to test whether the correlation between pumpage and chemical concentration is coincidental, or whether there is a causal relationship.

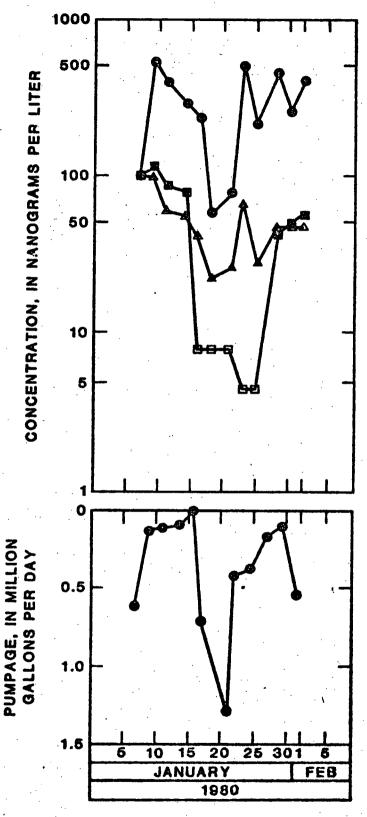


Figure 2.--Changes in water quality in St. Louis Park Municipal Well 4 and pumpage from Well 6, January 1980. Both wells are completed in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer (from Hult, 1981a)

EXPLANATION

- Acenaphthalene
- Fluorene
- ▲ Biphenyl

NOTE: Open symbol indicates compound present at less than concentration indicated

Continued detailed evaluation of the contaminant source in the drift and Platteville aquifer and of movement of contaminants through the St. Peter, Ironton-Galesville, and Mount Simon-Hinckley aquifers is beyond the scope of the proposed project. However, some additional work on these aspects of the problem have been incorporated into the proposed project which will aid in designing and evaluating the source-management strategies shown in table 1. Results of ongoing basic research by the U.S. Geological Survey will be directly applicable to the St. Louis Park problem, but some outstanding questions are site-specific and will require additional field work. The scope of the proposed project could be expanded to include additional work if funding becomes available. The relationship between past projects, the proposed project, and possible future projects is shown in table 2.

Table 2.--Relationship of proposed project to past and possible future projects

USCS project	Dates	Principal objectives	Related activities by other agencies	USGS publications	
July 1978- June 1979 Project		Develop an understanding of the transport of coal-tar derivatives through aquifers in the St.	Well abandon- ment program	Hult and Schoenberg, 1980	
MN-79-061	July 1979- Sept. 1980	Louis Park area.	by MOH	Hult, 1981a; 1981b	
Proposed project	Oct. 1980- Sept. 1982	Develop an improved understanding of contaminant distribution and transport in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer.	Design of pro- posed remedial action by con- sultants to MDH	1982	
Possible future	Oct. 1981- Sept. 1982	Continue collection of time-series data in all aquifers. If additional funding becomes available, refine understanding of transport processes in the drift, Platteville, St. Peter, Ironton-Galesville, and Mount Simon-Hinckley aquifers as needed to evaluate proposed remedial measures.	Implementation of remedial actions by State and		
projects	Oct. 1982- Sept. 1983	Attempt calibration of transport models based on four years of time-series chemical data and response of the ground-water system to remedial actions. Design a long-term monitoring strategy to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of remedial measures.	local agencies		

APPROACH

The principal activities needed to meet the objectives are (1) a mass sampling of wells in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer to determine the areal extent of measureable contamination, (2) refinement and maintenance of the network used to monitor water levels, water quality, and pumpage, (3) additional coring, sampling, and chemical analyses to better define the composition and physical characteristics of the contaminant sources in the drift and well W23, (4) continued work on identifying, locating, testing, and sealing or reconstructing multiaquifer wells; this work will be coordinated with the Minnesota Department of Health, and (5) refinement of transport models of the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer to reflect actual hydrogeologic boundaries and hydraulic and chemical stresses. As funding, time, and the availability of wells permit, attempts will be made to obtain additional time-series data on water quality in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan, and to continue monitoring water quality in other aquifers.

The Regional Water-Quality Specialist will be consulted in order to develop a quality-assurance program. This is reeded to ensure the validity of chemical analyses from the various laboratories involved. Continued support will be available from the U.S. Geological Survey laboratories in developing the quality-assurance program and in chemical characterization of the contaminants. A complete description of the quality-assurance program will be developed as part of the proposed project.

Mass Sampling of Prairie du Chien-Jordan Aquifer

Mass sampling of water from wells in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer is needed to obtain more complete information on the distribution of individual organic and inorganic constituents within the aquifer at a single time. No additional wells will be installed for this sampling effort. Many wells in the area are used for air conditioning and irrigation and may not be available for sampling during winter months. An attempt will be made to coordinate this sampling effort with the ongoing monitoring by the MDH. Specifically, the MDH could help by making arrangements for sampling of wells that usually are not available. It would also be highly desirable for the MDH to analyze the concentration of PAH compounds by HPLC in samples taken at the same time as those collected by the U.S. Geological Survey for analysis by an EPA contractor. Because the MDH intends to continue monitoring, this approach will require no additional laboratory work by the MDH. It will, however, help in the evaluation of the compatibility and reproducibility of analytical results from the various laboratories involved.

- Tasks: 1. Compile existing information on water quality and wells.
 - 2. Identify areas where additional wells are needed.
 - 3. Compile list of candidate wells for sampling.
 - 4. Field locate new wells and make necessary arrangements.
 - 5. Sample approximately 40 wells within 2- to 4-week period.

Refinement and Maintenance of Monitoring Network

Water quality, water levels, and (or) pumpage from about 300 wells in the St. Louis Park area were measured as part of the previous project. This network will be recvaluated, modified, and maintained as necessary to best meet the data needs of the proposed project and future activities.

About 4 additional recorders will be installed to monitor pumpage and water levels in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer. The frequency of measurement will be reduced at most wells in the drift and Platteville. Attempts will continue to locate additional wells in areas where data are sparse.

Physical and Chemical Characterization of the Drift and
Platteville Aquifers and Contaminants in Well 23

Cores will be obtained from at least two additional test holes in the most highly contaminated volume of drift and from the coal tar in Well 23. These samples, some previously collected cores, and fluid pumped from selected wells will be chemically analyzed for individual organic compounds. The samples will be analyzed by an EPA contractor and by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Aquifer tests in the drift and Platteville are needed to better evaluate aquifer characteristics and for the MDH contractor to design management strategies. Pumping tests will be conducted if the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency can obtain necessary permits (if any) for discharge of contaminated water. Additional testing may include slug-testing of piezometers and laboratory analyses of cores for porosity and hydraulic conductivity.

Continued work on the chemical and biological fate of the organic contaminants in the drift and Platteville aquifer will be coordinated with U.S. Geological Survey Research Groups.

Evaluation of Multiaquifer Wells

As additional wells are located in the field, the U.S. Geological Survey will log the wells geophysically and measure water levels and vertical flow within the well bore (if any). The Minnesota Department of Health will provide for removal of obstructions in the well bore (if any), collect and analyze water samples, log with downhole television camera, and permanently seal or reconstruct as monitoring wells if needed and as funding permits.

Model Development

The purpose of a ground-water solute transport model is to (1) provide a framework for quantitative accounting of the major processes in and properties of the ground-water system that govern the transport of contaminants, and

(2) provide a tool that can be used in quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the effectiveness of ongoing and possible future remedial actions aimed at reducing the severity of contamination in the Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifer.

Tasks:

- 1. Expand and refine present two-dimensional transport model (Konikow and Broedehoeft code) to better reflect actual conditions. Test parameter sensitivities.
- 2. Using SWI?, incorporate separate layers for Prairie du Chien and Jordan, and realistic boundary conditions. Attempt calibration by matching head changes (steady-state and transient).
- 2a. If necessary to reduce computer costs, construct and use threedimensional flow model (Trescott code) to evaluate flow problem.
 Transfer refinements to SWIP and retest.
- 3. Using SWIP, add simplified history of contaminant introduction to evaluate transport rates and directions, parameter sensitivities, and uncertainties that may be caused by unlocated multiaquifer wells.
- 4. Using SWIP and the measured distribution of contaminants, evaluate effect of manipulating pumpage, including municipal wells, industrial wells, and hypothetical gradient-control wells.
- 5. Using SWIP, and as time and time-series data permit, attempt calibration of transient transport of selected contaminants.

Model data needs and source of information

- Aquifer and confining bed geometry from Hult and Schoenberg, 1980;
 Guswa, 1981.
- Aquifer and confining bed hydraulic properties from previous pumping and laboratory tests in St. Louis Park and elsewhere in the Twin Cities basin - Guswa 1981, and ATES project.
- 3. Hydrogeologic boundaries from Guswa, 1981 (Twin Cities project).
- Time-series data on hydraulic head from Hult and Schoenberg, 1980;
 Guswa, 1981, and from monitoring network refined and operated for the current project.
- 5. Adsorption isotherms from batch experiments to be conducted by the University of Minnesota for phenol, naphthalene, and acenaphthene.
- 6. Time-series data on ground-water withdrawals compiled for previous project (061) and from monitoring network refined and operated for current project.
- 7. Hydraulic effect of multiaquifer wells from Hult, 1981a; 1981b; and from measurements made for the current project.
- Chemical effects of multiaquifer wells from Hult and Schoenberg,
 1980; Hult, 1981a; 1981b; and from measurements made for the current project.
- Present distribution of selected contaminant compounds from Hult,
 1981a, and from chemical mass measurements made for the current project.
- 10. Time-series data on concentration of selected contaminant compounds from Hult, 1981a. Some additional measurements may be made for the current project.

TIME SCHEDULE AND REPORT PLANS

The project will take 2 years to complete (see below). Field work (other than network maintenance), model development, and report preparation will be completed in FY 81. The report will be submitted to Region by April 1, 1982. Because of the need for speedy publication, the report will be published in the WRI/open-file series. At some later time, however, the report could be considered for WSP publication.

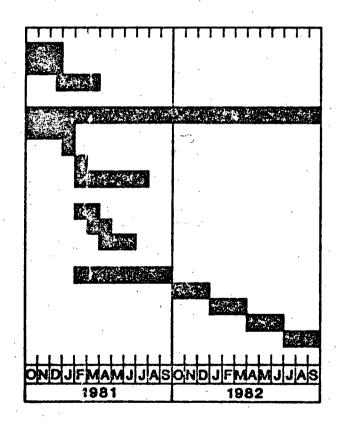
SUMMARY WORK PLAN

Project Proposal and Plan Previous Reports to District Design Quality Assurance Program

Maintain Hydrologic Data Network Initial Field Work Initial Sampling Mass Sampling Additional Field Work

Refine Existing Transport Model SWIP Model Functional SWIP Model Well-posed

Report Preparation
District Review
Colleague Review
Region Review and Headquarters
Drafting and Printing



COST SCHEDULE

The costs for this proposed project (Federal FY 81 and 82) will be shared by the city of St. Louis Park, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Geological Survey. The Minnesota Department of Health will collect and analyze samples from municipal wells, provide down-hole television camera surveys, and prepare selected wells for geophysical logging (through the well-abandonment program) in the amount of \$36,000 in lieu of funds that will be matched by the Geological Survey. The city of St. Louis Park will assist in monitoring pumpage, water levels, and water quality in municipal wells, and will provide landscaping of monitoring-well sites in the amount of \$10,000 in lieu of funds that will be matched by the Geological Survey. Proposed funding and expenditures are as follows.

St. Louis Park Proposed Funding for FY 81

;	Cash	Services	USGS match	worsc1	DOTSC ²	Net cash
EPA	\$50,000	\$	\$	\$ 7,250	\$12,750	\$30,000
SLP	5,000	10,000	15,000	2,700	5,100	12,200
MPCA	$14,000^3$		14,000	2,520	7,140	18,340
MOH	5,000	36,000	41,000	7,380	11,730	26,890
Total	74,000	46,000	70,000	19,850	36,720	87,430

Itemized expenditures for FY 1981

Salaries	48,430
Travel	3,000
Supplies	2,500
Equipment	
Vehicles	2,800
Computer	10,700
Laboratory	5,000
Drilling and physical analyses of cores	7,000
Analytical services (University of Minnesota)	3,000
District support	36,720
Headquarters support	19,850
Direct services	46,000
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190,000 Total .

Proposed Funding for FY 82--Report processing and publication

Salaries		\$ 19.000
Printing and reproduction		2,500
District support		
Headquarters support	••••••	3,000

Total \$ 33,000

¹ EPA - 14.5 percent; all others at 9 percent.
2 25.5 percent of all cash and matching; 0 percent on direct services.
3 Funds may come from either MPCA or MDH.

PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS AND AVAILABILITY

District personnel needed for the project are as follows:

	FY 81	FY 82
Hydrologist GS-11	.full time	1/2 time
Hydrologist GS-11	1/5 time	
Hydrologist GS-7	1/4 time	
Hydrologic Technician	3/4 time	1/4 time

These personnel are presently available in the district.

The assistance of the Regional Water-Quality Specialist will be requested to help develop a quality-assurance program in coordination with Central Laboratory and the Research Group. It is anticipated that ongoing research by the Research Group on biotransformation will continue, and that this team will be available for consultation. In-district assistance in the use of the SWIP code is available, but additional consultants may be required.

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